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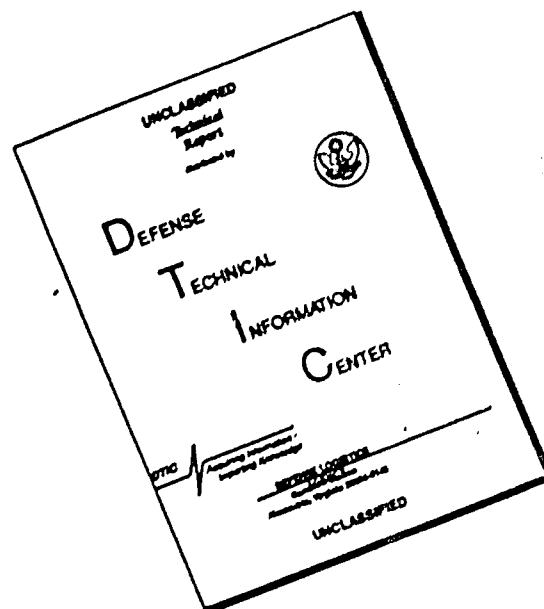
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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
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AVHGC-DST

31 AUG 1969

SUBJECT: Senior Officer Debriefing Report

Assistant Chief of Staff for Force Development
Department of the Army
Washington, D.C. 20310

1. Attached are three copies of the Senior Officer Debriefing Report submitted by MG Orwin C. Talbott. The report covers the period 17 April 1968 to 9 August 1969 during which time MG Talbott served as CG, 1st Infantry Division.
2. MG Talbott is recommended as a candidate guest speaker at appropriate joint colleges and service schools.

FOR THE COMMANDER:

C. D. WILSON
1LT, AGC
Assistant Adjutant General

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SENIOR OFFICER DEBRIEFING PROGRAM (RCS-CSFOR-74) (U)

Country: Republic of Vietnam

Debrief Report by : Major General Orwin C. Talbott

Duty Assignment: Commanding General, 1st Infantry Division,
APO San Francisco 96345

Inclusive Dates: 17 April 1968 - 9 August 1969

Date of Report: 9 August 1969

1. (C) Causative factors of the insurgency.

a. Political: No Comment.

b. Military. Many members of the civilian population in the 1st Infantry Division TAOI were trained in insurgency warfare during years of hostility against the French and the Japanese. Also, leadership and organizational ability was present in the TAOI in the form of regroupees -- those Vietnamese who had returned to North Vietnam at the end of the Indochina War where they received additional training prior to being sent south again. ARVN forces on the other hand, were poorly led and trained. Heavy losses had been sustained among the leadership that was already in short supply. The defensive strategy of the French has been deeply imbedded in ARVN tactics. GVN forces across the country side offered lucrative vulnerable targets.

c. Economic, social, and ideological. The economic and social needs of South Vietnam are important factors in communist ideological tactics. Communism was the vehicle through which reforms, where needed, were promised. Where GVN was not meeting the needs of the people, the Viet Cong promised to remedy the situation, accounting for their appeal to the intelligentsia and middle class.

2. (C) The Insurgent.

a. Organization. The parallel military/political organization,

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peculiar to the communist structure, extends from COSVN through the subregion and districts down to the villages and hamlets. The enemy has two main subregions (SR-1 and SR-5) in 1st Division's TAOI. SR-1 and SR-5 are similar in organization. They were established before 1968 when COSVN subdivided MR-4 in order to better control and coordinate the Tet 68 attack on Saigon. The subregions have an organization with three basic staffs: Rear Service, Political, and Military. SR-1 and SR-5 control both district and main force units.

b. Command Control. Virtually all VC operations in our TAOI are thoroughly planned and rehearsed prior to execution. The enemy tries to develop near-automatic reactions for every contingency. The VC commander generally is subject to a very rigid chain of command. Political guidance from COSVN is translated into general missions by SR-1 and SR-5 who also approve the final tactical plans. In our TAOI there is some indication that different commanders are given different degrees of latitude. Nam Chau, commanding officer of the Dong Nai Regiment, seems to have considerable leeway. This is perhaps because he commands the only main force regiment in SR-5. Also, there are numerous ex-members of the Dong Nai Regiment in the SR-5 structure. Occasionally a commander will be given a little more leeway because of the nature of his unit. An example of this is the commander of the sapper battalion, Gia Dinh 4 of the 273C Quyet Thang Regiment. Typically, however, most headquarters provide their subordinate elements with specific instructions on the way an operation is to be conducted. Prior to a VC operation, planning is extensive. Sand tables are used, signals are rehearsed, and all contingencies planned for. Great attention is given to every detail. While VC operations are very well planned, this detailed planning inhibits their flexibility to some degree.

c. Strategy and tactics. VC tactics in our AO do not differ significantly from other areas of Vietnam. Against

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US units on RIF missions, the enemy conducts harassing attacks with small units, utilizing mortars, rocket propelled grenades, claymores, and mines. I often think that the VC deliberately lure us into an assault on a fortified base camp. If they have the opportunity to remove their supplies, they attempt to engage our units from these fortified positions, sometimes inflicting heavy casualties.

d. Armament. The enemy has brought no unusual weapons into combat operations and carefully conserves his available materiel. He has made full use of sniping, booby traps, mines, rocketry and mortars. Two weapons of special interest in our TAOI are rocket-powered grenades and command-detonated mines. RPG's are encountered in practically every engagement between 1st Infantry Division and VC units. The RPG is perhaps to this war what the German 88 was to World War II -- a versatile, effective enemy weapon which must be respected. It is the pocket artillery of the VC. Usually the first thing fired by the VC when we pop an ambush is a RPG. Command-detonated mines, similar to our claymores but larger and usually of Chinese manufacture, are frequently encountered.

e. Transportation. The enemy moves his supplies by the most expedient method; foot, sampans, bicycles, oxcarts, and occasionally by truck when operating near the Cambodian border. There appears to be a trend towards greater utilization of motorbikes by the insurgents.

f. Communications. This vital area has been one of the weakest points in the VC/NVA forces I have confronted in the 1st Infantry Division's TAOI. During Tet 68, the enemy's communication problem became apparent. The further south the enemy units moved, the more difficult it became for their headquarters to maintain effective command and control. When allied operations began to locate enemy units and force them to divert from preplanned routes, the command and control line broke down completely. It soon became a situation of every unit for itself. Since then the enemy has taken steps to improve his communications capabilities and eliminate these critical defects.

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To date his efforts have been inadequate. However, recent contacts with the 7th Division (NVA) forces indicate an increased sophistication with landlines, radios, and runners providing more flexibility and depth.

g. Communist involvement. No Comment.

h. Other outside support. Except for North Vietnam, outside force is not significant as far as volunteers are concerned. The tacit approval of the Cambodians in allowing their country to be used as a supply and personnel base gives the enemy an excellent advantage. This was demonstrated most forceably to me in our battles along the Cambodian border in the Fishhook area in the fall of 1968. In some of the roughest fighting this division has encountered, we were forced to fight an enemy operating from Cambodian base camps. We received artillery fire from guns positioned in Cambodia and observed supplies and personnel moving into positions by truck to attack our units. Two major routes run into our TAOI directly from Cambodia, the Adams Road and the Serpes Jungle Highway.

i. Intelligence and counterintelligence. The military intelligence staffs of SR-1 and SR-5 have their own reconnaissance elements organized down to village and hamlet level. Enemy intelligence includes reconnaissance, radio intercept, agents, and document translation. They also produce false documents, papers and ID's for infiltrators. The counter-intelligence, or the Security Section of the Political Staffs of SR-1 and SR-5, is to ferret out "counterrevolutionaries" and spies.

j. Psychological. The enemy is psychologically attuned to a closed view of life. He is thus vulnerable to mental compromise if his view of the world is shown to be false.

3. (C) Local government stability actions.

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- a. International relationships: No Comment.
- b. Government Organizations: No Comment
- c. Forces:

(1) **Military Forces.** The ARVN military unit which worked most often with the 1st Infantry Division was the 5th ARVN Division. The 5th ARVN Division is not one of the most effective units in ARVN. Based near Saigon, the 5th Division was commanded by MG Thuan, who was the Division Chief of Staff when President Thieu was the Division Commander. Thus my remarks towards ARVN in the 1st Infantry Division's TAOI should be taken with the realization that perhaps the command structure of the division is based upon political reliability to avoid the threat of coup d'etat.

(a). **Tactics:** The ARVN habitually operated in battalion-size units. Authority was not delegated by battalion commanders and thus subordinate commanders failed to use their own initiative. The current "Dong Tien" (progress together) program is just beginning to correct this. Night operations are seldom conducted. At night, battalion-size units typically set up poor defensive positions. The basic ARVN soldier can be just as good a fighter as his US counterpart though he lacks physical strength and is usually poorly led. I think effective leadership is probably ARVN's most serious problem, particularly at the field grade level. The ARVN field grade officer in too many instances is concerned with matters far-removed from his military duties.

(b). **Intelligence.** ARVN is quick to exploit ralliers and has had a significant success in locating enemy caches and base camps. Intelligence techniques employed are similar to those of US units, but are enhanced by ARVN's more ready access to the civilian populace. Language is no problem. ARVN appeared to me to be quick to exploit any intelligence data.

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(2) Paramilitary forces/police.

(a). Tactics. Mobile resource control teams cooperate with US forces in setting up both check points and population control points. The police have had increasing success in locating VC special action units in populated areas. In areas which have been relatively cleared of VC main force units, such as the southern section of our TAOI, they are an effective security force. However, they have reduced effectiveness in night operations. They prefer the comfort of the police station to the darkness of the night.

(b). Intelligence tactics. The police in the 1st Infantry Division TAOI have a network of voluntary and paid informants whose value is marginal. This is chiefly due to the inability of the police to protect their informers from VC assassination.

(c). Training. Training varies widely in quality.

d. Intelligence and counterintelligence.

(1) Organization. No Comment.

(2) Penetration. Penetration of the VC has been made, but its effectiveness is marginal.

(3) Use of civilian populace. Both paid and voluntary informers are used by GVN.

(4) Communications. This is one of the limiting factors in getting ARVN to operate in small units.

(5) Effectiveness. There is still much room for improvement as is evidenced by continued terrorist incidents throughout South Vietnam. Until GVN can eliminate the threat of VC reprisal, their intelligence and counterintelligence effort will be severely hampered.

(6) US Classified material. I consider ARVN unable to protect US Classified material, primarily because of enemy infiltration throughout both ARVN and GVN. One US officer

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familiar with the 5th ARVN estimates that ten percent of the division are VC or under VC pressures. This is probably an exaggeration.

e. Civic action, and its effectiveness. GVN civic action in our TAOI is a function of leadership, whether at province, district or revolutionary development team level. An example of this is the decision of the Ben Cat District Chief, LTC Thien, to take over MEDCAP in his district. I am told that he just wanted to prove he could do it.

f. Political action.

(1) Propaganda.

(a). Media employed and effectiveness. The GVN psyops effort is poor at best. They lack equipment, funds, and operate only on a very low level. They are sometimes extremely slow in exploiting ralliers.

(b). Techniques for determining and satisfying grievances. Binh Doung Province places a cadre in each hamlet for the purposes of census taking and determining the aspirations and grievances of the hamlet population and forwarding these to appropriate GVN authorities.

(2) Isolation techniques. Resettlement and reintegration - Binh Doung Province does conduct resettlement operations but the 1st Infantry Division's contact is peripheral. During March 1969, 2,200 inhabitants of the Michelin Rubber Plantation were relocated. This is a prime division operations area.

4. (C) US Role in support of local government.

a. US Country Team. No Comment.

b. US Military Forces.

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(1) Involvement. The 1st Infantry Division conducted tactical operations throughout III CTZ.

(2) Command and relationship with government forces. Command structure between the 1st Infantry Division and ARVN units has been characterized by the 5th ARVN Division placing regimental or battalion-sized units OPCON to the division. While OPCON to the division, ARVN units appeared to be only nominally working for the division and remained in close contact with their parent ARVN unit.

(3) Location of US forces: US forces were located with and sometimes OPCON to ARVN regimental, battalion, and company-sized units.

(4) Functions performed at various levels. Functions performed in support of GVN were civic action, psyops, training of ARVN and joint operations.

(a). Civic Action. Our civic action program was based on three principles. First, through careful planning and coordination, the division directed its effort to support and supplement GVN programs. Second, all projects were carefully researched to insure that they met the aspirations of the people. Finally, all assistance was given in as subtle a manner as possible. A particularly successful civic action program was developed in performing corrective surgery for Vietnamese. The most desirable type operations are those involving highly visible afflictions such as cleft palates, artificial limbs, etc. The psychological impact of this kind of program is tremendous and is well worth the amount of time and coordination involved. In addition, medical corps officers are enthusiastic about it because of the opportunity for surgical experience as well as the humanitarian aspect. Engineer support is invaluable to a civic action program. The upgrading of roads besides creating good will among the population also lends an additional measure of security. This has a tremendous impact on the economy and pacification status of the area. Engineer technology also can be effective in improving sanitary conditions and providing sources of fresh water. Another fruitful field for civic action is education. In addition to winning the hearts and minds of the younger generation, it

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has a favorable impact on parents. Additionally, it affects the teachers who are key communicators in the Vietnamese society. Such things as the upgrading of school facilities, playground equipment, and school kits were found to be effective. The 1st Infantry Division organized educational trips to Saigon for school children and teachers. While in Saigon they visited the zoo, historical shrines, and the National Assembly building. If possible, they are given the address of their representative in the Government. Since the children carry back to their parents the day's sights, an added benefit is gained in offsetting VC propaganda that claims the destruction of Saigon and the weakness of the GVN. Another technique employed was to award honor students prizes of books and other literature during graduation ceremonies. In Di An District, sewing machines were purchased and sewing classes were held for young women, giving them an opportunity to learn a trade. The school has proven to be a great success.

(b). **Psyops.** Aerial psyops has proven effective in the Division TAOI, particularly when employed to support units in contact. A technique used with success was to broadcast a rally or surrender appeal, then declare a short cease-fire to allow the enemy to rally. This technique was employed against elements of the Dong Nai Regiment in the An Son area, yielding 15 ralliers (6NVA) in a period of four days. To be effective, psyop against enemy units should be as detailed and as personal in nature as possible. The use of OB data, casualty figures, personal appeals by ralliers, and exploitation of specific vulnerabilities have all proven effective. A method of targeting VCI with psyop was developed by 1st Infantry Division. This is known as the "white envelope system." The envelope contains a personal guarantee of amnesty by the district chief, a list of the rewards inducement program, rally instructions, and other material as deemed appropriate. This is given to the VCI family with the message, "It's only a matter of

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time before this person is killed, persuade him to rally before it is too late." Psyop has been successfully integrated into CA projects by incorporating a subtle psyop theme through the use of GVN symbols and national colors in such things as health kits, school kits, toys, T-shirts, and on swap wrappers. In addition, psyop elements accompany all MEDCAP operations.

(c). Training. The 1st Infantry Division continually conducts extensive training of 5th ARVN. By the end of August 1969 all of the latter's infantry battalions will have completed four weeks refresher training under division auspices. There is a five-man training team at the 5th ARVN's NCO Academy which presents the majority of that organization's formal instruction. Additionally, the division sponsors periodic groups of junior officers from 5th ARVN's platoon leader and company commander school. These junior officers join US units for a period of seven days for OJT. All units and staffs of the division support the "Dong Tien" (progress together) program in which direct contact is made with counterpart units in the 5th ARVN Division to discuss mutual problems and provide assistance and training where necessary.

(d). Joint operations. The division conducts tactical exercises with ARVN units. During July 1969, 1st Division battalions, co-located with ARVN battalions in a NDP, operated joint command posts, and conducted joint operations. Notable also during this period was the establishment of a combined US/ARVN ready reaction force. This force conducted combined operations while maintaining an instantaneous alert status for immediate extraction and insertion into rapidly developing contacts of either the 1st Infantry Division or the 5th ARVN Division, as requested by their respective commanding generals. Characteristic of the 1st Infantry Division actions undertaken to assist GVN was the division's participation in the Accelerated Pacification Campaign. This included the pacification of Lam Son,

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the most successful such program in Vietnam. Conducting joint seal operations with ARVN, 1st Infantry Division units successfully removed the VCI from the hamlets in the Lam Son area, significantly upgrading their pacification status.

(5) Effectiveness of US Military Support. 1st Division support of ARVN has been moderately effective but has been inhibited by the role that the 5th ARVN Division plays in the political power structure of GVN.

(6) Areas of Inadequacy. The biggest single problem which faces ARVN is its lack of sound leadership at the field grade level. This was noted above but needs much greater emphasis here. They also face problems of equipment shortage. Their M41 tanks are old, lack power and are not suited for a jungle busting role. Current ARVN H-34 helicopters are too large, too slow, and a maintenance problem. ARVN needs artillery. Perhaps US M101 towed artillery and other equipment could be turned over as US units are pulled out.

(7) Logistical support. The 1st Division gives no direct logistical or financial support to GVN but is frequently called upon to support ARVN units operating with the division. This support requirement is not caused by ARVN inability to support itself, but by their unwillingness to properly plan or to force their own logistical system to work.

(8) Intelligence. The 1st Infantry Division conducts normal intelligence operations, OI, IPW, G2 Air, etc., in support of its operations. The counterintelligence section is responsible for all counterintelligence operations and inspections, operation of agent nets, and the supervision of the division's program against the Viet Cong Infrastructure in support of GVN's Phung Hoang (Phoenix) program. Additionally, the division operates a joint MID with ARVN counterparts which acts as a funnel of intelligence information between ARVN and the 1st Infantry Division.

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5. (U) N/A

6. (C) Lessons learned.

a. Areas needing continued emphasis are:

- (1) Economic and political reform,
- (2) Expanded local civic action program: ucl
- (3) Logistical re-equipping of ARVN.

b. Recommendations. The following areas listed as recommendations have already been implemented within the division and are included for added emphasis:

(1) Efforts must be continued to upgrade the quality of field grade officers within ARVN units. While training and education are presently effective for company grade officers, most of the upgrading action for the field grade officer level may require selective replacement.

(2) More specific guidance on the term OPCON as it applies to ARVN units who are closely operating with US units, has been disseminated throughout the command. Further refinement is still necessary in order that the "Dong Tien" (progress together) program can be fully effected.

(3) The emphasis on PSYOP must continue not only in the traditional manner but in personal efforts by all individuals at every level of command.

(4) In the amplification of recommendation (3) above, we have continued to use the "white envelope" system. MACV, J-2's current reduction of our CIF budget, which supports our Volunteer Informant Program, may seriously constrain this third party inducement activity. These funds should continue to be made available.

(5) The efforts to modernize ARVN equipment must continue in order that the Vietnamese can keep pace with the operational commitments paralleling the US forces activities.

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